September 27, 1972

Dear Peter,

My apologies for this long delay in answering your June 21 letter. In it you asked if I could supply you with some information relating to the early thinking of Marcus Rhoades which you might use in composing the laudation for the commemorative volume of Theoretical and Applied Genetics. The delay relates to my inability to come to some judgment on the mode of handling this request, that is, whether or not you wanted illustrative stories or judgment statements. I realize that both modes could be useful for your purposes.

On the enclosed sheets I have made some comments regarding the period that Marcus spent at Cornell. If you wish to have comments in another form, please let me know and I will try to give them to you.

Very best wishes to you and Sally,

Sincerely,

Marcus Rhoades came to Cornell after spending a year at Cal. Tech. where he received his Masters degree working with Drosophila. While at Cal. Tech. he picked up the most advanced genetic concepts of that period and brought these with him to Cornell where he r gistered for a Ph.D. degree. These views of genetics were important because some of them had not yet penetrated into the concepts of the genetics group at Cornell. And, I was one of the first persons to benefit by them. In his very first visit to my lab. he immediately grasped the nature and purposes of my research. In the course of this first discussion, he described how the materials I was using could serve to answer some genetic questions that were being posed at the time. This was done with great enthusiasm and quite selfless interest. He was able, also, to communicate his enthusiasm to others, and this talent proved to be most important during all of his stay at Cornell. It helped to form an active discussion group, to stimulate the members of this group to more active and productive participation in their researches, and to unite them in ties of mutual respect.

Another talent was very evident in those early days. This was his ability to analyse thoroughly the material appearing in published articles. He allowed nothing to escape him. This expression of complete and thorough analysis, requiring stamina and perseverance, has never faded. It characterizes all of his researches right up to the present day. For the young graduate student at Cornell this precision in thinking and in research exhibited by another graduate student (Marcus in this instance) was a model to follow. It had a very great influence on the graduate

students in our group. The members of the group soon learned to scorn sloppy research and sloppy thinking. Without question, Marcus was the key member of the active group of graduate students. He brought them cohesion, enthusiasm, and an example to follow.

During his stay at Cornell, Marcus also showed that inner self-confidence that allowed him to conduct the research for his doctoral thesis without fears. His research project was totally unorthodox and he brought it to a stunning conclusion, building and coordinating the parts piece-by-piece. This research introduced new concepts in genetics. Subsequently it served to modify plant breeding techniques and with extraordinary consequences.

Remaining at Cornell, Marcus went on to other discoveries of great significance, analysis of Dt being a case in point. All through his Cornell days there was never a time when his enthusiasm failed for he was continually at the frontiers of genetic thought and influencing its future direction.

Barbara McClintock